

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8102

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY MANILA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, PLOS, CH

SUBJ: PRC GEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION

1. SUMMARY. THE PRC CLAIMS TO HAVE COMPLETED AERIAL GEOLOGICAL SURVEYS OVER THE SOUTHERN YELLOW SEA, THE EAST CHINA SEA AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA. STEPPED UP SURVEYING AND EXPLORATION IS ALSO REPORTED ON LAND. ALTHOUGH GEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION HAS ALWAYS ENJOYED A HIGH PRIORITY IN CHINA, ACTIVITY HAS PROBABLY INCREASED SINCE THE TACHING CONFERENCE. OFF-SHORE SURVEYS MAY ALSO BE INTENDED TO UNDERLINE CHINA'S CLAIM TO RESOURCES ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF. END SUMMARY.

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2. THE JUNE 30 "PEOPLE'S DAILY" CARRIES AN NCNA REPORT THAT THE STATE GEOLOGICAL BUREAU HAS COMPLETED AERIAL GEOLOGICAL SURVEYS IN SPECIFIC AREAS OF THE SOUTHERN YELLOW SEA, THE EAST CHINA SEA AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA. THE REPORT STATES THAT THEY SURVEY WORK, DONE BY THE 909TH AERIAL SURVEY

BRIGADE, COMMENCED IN JUNE 1974 AND WAS COMPLETED IN FEBRUARY 1976. THE ARTICLE SAYS THAT THE SURVEY HAS PROVIDED A PRELIMINARY UNDERSTANDING OF THE POSSIBLE DISTRIBUTION OF SUBTERRANEAN MINERAL RESOURCES.

3. ALSO ON JUNE 30, THE "KWANGMING DAILY" CARRIES AN NCNA REPORT ON SUCCESSES ON THE NATIONAL GEOLOGICAL SURVEYING "FRONT". TO DATE THIS YEAR, THIS "SECTOR" HAS SUBMITTED TO THE GOVERNMENT SOME 125 REPORTS, OVER HALF OF WHICH WERE SUBMITTED IN MAY. RELATIVELY PROMISING NEW IRON, COAL, COPPER, SULFUR AND OIL DEPOSITS HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED IN ANHWEI, SHANTUNG, KWANGTUN, KIANGSI, SUCHOW, KWANGSI, FUKIEN, HUPEI, SINKIANG, HEILUNGKIANG AND LIAONING. IN APRIL THE AMOUNT OF EXPLORATORY DRILLING NATIONWIDE SET A HISTORICAL RECORD; DRILLING IN MAY SURPASSED THE APRIL LEVEL BY 100,000 METERS, THE ARTICLE SAID.

4. COMMENT: GEOLOGICAL SURVEYING AND EXPLORATION HAVE ALWAYS ENJOYED A HIGH PRIORITY IN THE PRC. THE "KWANGMING DAILY" ARTICLE SUGGESTS STEPPED UP ACTIVITY IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE WAKE OF THE TACHING CONFERENCE, A MAJOR THRUST OF WHICH WAS ACCELERATED DISCOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT OF MINERAL RESOURCES. THE AERIAL SURVEY OF CHINA'S CONTINENTAL SHELF PREDATES THE TACHING CONFERENCE AND IS AN EXTENSION OF THE PRC'S TWENTY-YEAR PROGRAM TO DISCOVER AND DEVELOP NEW PETROLEUM RESOURCES. ACTUAL DEVELOPMENT (AS OPPOSED TO LIMITED EXPLORATION) OF OFF-SHORE OIL RESOURCES IN LOCATIONS OTHER THAN THE POHAI GULF IS PROBABLY YEARS AWAY, HOWEVER. THIS SUGGESTS THAT PART OF THE REASON FOR THE NCNA ARTICLE WAS THE PRC'S DESIRE TO ASSERT ITS RIGHTFUL CLAIM TO OFF-SHORE RESOURCES (AT A TIME WHEN THIS ISSUE IS UNDER CONSIDERATION AT THE UN LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE) IN THE FACE OF POTENTIAL ENCROACHMENT FROM NEIGHBORING CLAIMANTS. DEAN

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